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AUTHOR McCall, Morgan W., Jr.
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ABSTRACT

Alternatives to traditional views about leadership suggest a dramatically different approach, including focusing on problems rather than individuals, examining leadership positions at critical organizational junctures, and emphasizing environmental and organizational forces that constrain leader behavior. Human resource professionals responding to alternative views must be in a position to anticipate the problems and opportunities facing the organization. Many traditional functions, e.g., planning and organizing, must be redefined. Research in the field of leadership is comparable to the progress of astronomy, which offers some new assumptions to guide future efforts. (Author/JAC)

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Leadership: Some Alternative Views and Their Implications

Morgan W. McCall, Jr.

Center for Creative Leadership

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LEADERSHIP: SOME ALTERNATIVE VIEWS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

> Warts are wonderful structures. They can appear overnight on any part of the skin, like mushrooms on a damp lawn, full grown and splendid in the complexity of their architecture. . . . They sit there like turreted mounds of dense, impenetrable horn, impregnable, designed for defense against the world outside. (Thomas, 1979, p. 76)

Like warts, it sometimes seems that leadership theory stands impregnable. Although attempts at validating the major theories are, at best, inconclusive (Yukl, 1981), traditional approaches to leadership continue to dominate both research and the applications derived from it. An increased torrent of criticism (e.g., Dubin, 1979; Campbell, 1970; Mintzberg, 1981) has had little visible effect on the field and is often lost in the inflamed and mostly spurious debates over the differences between leaders and managers.

It is the basic premise of this paper that research on managers is relevant to leadership. It is particularly relevant to practitioners in organizations who bear the charge of developing leadership for their organizations. While it is premature to write an obituary for training based on traditional leadership theory, it is clear that the results of many such efforts leave room for improvement (Goldstein, 1980; Stogdill, 1974; Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler, & Weick, 1970).

The purpose of this paper is to examine some alternative ways of viewing leadership in organizations and to draw from

these alternatives some implications for leadership development practices. As House and Baetz (1979) have attempted to show, traditional approaches to leadership have contributed to knowledge, and it is not our intent to take issue with that. Rather, this paper uses traditional approaches as a foil against which to parry alternatives. Thus we begin by identifying the common themes underlying traditional theory, proceed to identify some alternatives, and, finally, examine some implications.

Traditional Leadership Theory

While definitions of leadership and the components of mainstream leadership theories vary considerably (Yukl, 1981; Stogdill, 1974), there do seem to be some common themes. First, the traditional view defines leadership as a social influence process of some sort. Whether it involves influence over and above the formal authority of the leader (Katz & Kahn, 1966) or some other means of getting others to do what the leader wants done, the crux of the matter is influence over the people in a follower group.

That is the second theme: traditional leadership models focus on the leader and a group. In an organizational context, this is usually the small group of subordinates reporting directly to a manager or supervisor. Some approaches concern themselves with behaviors, traits, or styles of the leader as they affect the subordinates; others view the

relationship in exchange or transactional terms. In either case, the theory attempts to explain the operation of influence on an intact group, usually defined by organizational reporting lines.

A third feature of traditional models is interest in group-level criterion variables, typically group satisfaction or group productivity. While the specific criteria vary, it is implied that effective leadership enhances some outcome of the follower group.

A fourth feature of traditional models, especially current ones, is the inclusion of contingencies--features of the situation that moderate the relationship between leader behavior (or characteristics) and the outcomes of the follower group. In essence, one kind of leader behavior will, under specifiable conditions, produce positive results. Under another set of conditions, a different leader behavior will be required. The specific contingency variables are derived from the immediate situation of the leader (e.g., position power) and/or of the group itself (e.g., the degree to which the task is structured).

These four characteristics of traditional leadership theories can be restated as a series of (largely untested) assumptions, and it is these assumptions that provide a foil for alternative views. The assumptions are:

1) That leadership always matters. Even if situations make a difference in what action will be effective, what leaders do influences group outcomes.

2) That leadership is all about getting immediate followers to do something better or be happier or something.

3) That the dynamics of leadership are really the same regardless of the location of the leader/group unit in the organization structure, and in spite of the type of organization or business in which it is embedded.

4) That because the leader/group unit is the central element of leadership, the moderator and outcome variables of interest are in close proximity to it. That is, those things that have immediate impact on the unit are the ones that have major implications for leadership effectiveness.

Alternative Assumptions

There are different assumptions that might be made about leadership, and, for purposes of this paper, an alternative view of leadership would make one (and probably several) of the following counter assumptions:

1) leadership is not just a social influence process. A leader can/should be able to influence organizations (or chunks of them), systems and process, structure, and even some elements of the environment. In some cases, leaders may not be able to influence anything at all.

2) leadership involves substantially more than a group of direct reports. Leaders must somehow contend with lateral relationships, outsiders, superiors at several levels, ad hoc groups and committees, and an assortment of other people over whom he or she has little or no formal authority. Even within the follower group, the leader may have to consider individuals and/or subgroups in quite different ways (Graen & Cashman, 1975).

3) Looking at individual leaders may not be enough. It may be that understanding leadership requires understanding how various leaders complement, compensate for, work around, team up with, ignore, or manipulate one another. It may even be more productive to look at what is being "leadered" about: for instance, by following key problems as they flow through an organization, looking at how various leaders enter into, drop out of, contribute to, or hinder the problem-solving process.

4) Performance and satisfaction of the group may be among the least interesting outcomes of leader behavior. Perhaps we should hold leaders accountable for system performance, solving key problems, organizational design, entrepreneurship, value transformation, environmental impact, and so on.

Figure 1 summarizes the contrast between the assumptions attributed to "traditional" and to "alternative" views of leadership. The remainder of this paper will examine some of the work falling more or less into the alternative camp, and

then attempt to describe implications for practice that the alternatives suggest.

Insert Figure 1 About Here

The Limited Impact Perspective

Recent research has cast serious doubt on the assumption that leadership always matters. One delightful study, for example, determined that being Napoleon accounted for only 15% of the variance in the outcomes of French military land battles during that time (Simonton, 1979). Questioning the impact of leadership has come at at least two levels: One group of researchers has looked at the influence of leadership on organizational outcomes; another has looked at impact on outcomes at the group level. In both cases, the conclusion is that leadership does not always make a difference.

Looking at organizational outcomes, Pfeffer (1978) has been an outspoken critic of the assumption that leadership always matters (also see Pfeffer and Slancik, 1978). Whether one is talking about individual mayors' influence on budget allocations (Lieberson & O'Connor, 1972) or the impact of university presidents on the events of college life (Cohen & March, 1974), there is certainly reason to believe that even powerful leaders are constrained by complex environmental and organizational forces.

Figure 1

Traditional and Alternative Views of Leadership

	TRADITIONAL	ALTERNATIVE
Basic definition	Social influence process	Influence over systems, structure, environment, processes, as well as over people
Central unit of interest	Interaction between individual leader and direct reports	Interaction between leader and wide range of contacts inside and outside the organization
Situational components	Variables in close proximity to leader-group unit	Environmental and organizational variables; types of problems dealt with
Dynamics	Contingencies basically the same across leadership positions, leadership always matters	Contingencies change as problems, environmental conditions change; Different leadership positions much more central than others; Leadership doesn't always matter
Criteria	Group productivity or satisfaction	Solving key problems; system design; organizational performance; control over environment

Considering group outcomes has generated an equivalent questioning of leader impact (Kerr & Jermier, 1978). Here the focus has been on substitutes and neutralizers: the identification of forces that replace or negate the impact of leader behavior on the performance or satisfaction of the group.

A pessimist might conclude that we shouldn't waste our time studying or training leaders because their impact on significant (and, apparently, insignificant) events is constrained. But there are other conclusions that still leave room for hope. First, some leaders in some situations will matter a great deal ("I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat"). The challenge is to identify and specify as best we can those circumstances where a leader or group of leaders might really make a difference. All leaders are not created equal--or at least the situations they face may be more or less recalcitrant.

Second, to know that leaders are often (severely) constrained by forces beyond their control is hardly news to leaders. How do they try to regain or maintain some degree of influence? Well, we might take a look at how they go about changing the environments they face, or altering the structures, systems, or processes in which they are embedded. We might examine how they deflect or subtly influence forces over which they have little control. We might even focus, as

Stewart (1976) has suggested, on what they do in those areas in which they do have some choice.

Third, if leadership matters in some situations, for some purposes, or at some times and not others, then timing becomes a central issue. In short, the complexion of leadership will change with time as well as circumstance.

The Managerial Activities Perspective

A body of remarkably consistent findings has emerged from the relatively small number of studies that documented what managers (leaders?) actually do. The emerging picture is of a world packed with a constant stream of activities, laced with interruptions, rich in variety of both contacts and topics, characterized by brief interactions, and filled with simultaneous issues that must be juggled and shifted incessantly.

While the activity patterns of managers do vary (Stewart, 1967), the essence of managerial life in an organizational setting is a swirl of people, things, and activities. Managing (leading?) is not a calm, logical, leisurely process that lends itself to long periods of reflective planning, making decisions with complete information, or extended periods of concentration on single issues.

The implications of these findings for leadership are numerous. A major one is that subordinates are only one of many types of people a leader must be able to work with.

Because of formal authority and because of familiarity that comes with time, the relationship between leader and led may, for many managers, be the least problematic in the network of contacts.

A second implication is that time spent with subordinates is time not spent doing other things. Which is more important is a significant leadership question, and, like most things in life, depends on circumstance and timing. A third implication, not directly tied to followers, is how leaders/managers plan, organize, coordinate and all those necessary things while living in a world of fragmentation, brevity, interruption, and variety.

An alternative view of leadership would, by necessity, have to consider the work pattern context in understanding managerial behavior.

Leadership Location

While traditional leadership theory does not make much of it, managerial jobs do seem to vary in content and importance. Nealey and Fiedler (1968), McCall and Segrist (Note 1), and others have demonstrated significant functional and level effects on managerial jobs. In fact, traditional job analysis and evaluation methods in industrial psychology were designed specifically to capture these differences. More telling examples of differences between between jobs are provided by leaders themselves:

> In any sphere of action there can be no comparison between the positions of number one and number two, three, or four. The duties and the problems of all persons other than number one are quite different and in many ways more difficult. It is always a misfortune when number two or three has to initiate a dominant plan or policy. He has to consider not only the merits of the policy, but the mind of his chief; not only what to advise, but what it is proper for him in his station to advise; not only what to do, but how to get it agreed, and how to get it done. Moreover, number two or three will have to reckon with numbers four, five, and six, or maybe some bright outsider, number twenty. . . .
>
> At the top there are great simplifications. An accepted leader has only to be sure of what it is best to do, or at least to have made up his mind about it. The loyalties which centre upon number one are enormous. If he trips, he must be sustained. If he makes mistakes, they must be covered. If he sleeps, he must not be wantonly disturbed. If he is no good, he must be pole-axed.
>
> (Churchill, 1962, p. 15)

A recent review of research on leadership and professional employees (McCall, in press) suggests still another significant factor differentiating leadership jobs--breakpoints. By this is meant leadership positions where the demands of dealing with the organization are equal to or greater than the demands of dealing with one's own unit. In R&D settings, for example, this occurs at the point where the rest of the organization must be convinced to support or accept ideas coming from the lab. Such jobs are breakpoints because failure can make the efforts of a significant chunk of the organization all to no avail.

Considering leader location suggests, first of all, that the situational variables affecting leadership are far

broader than just those factors associated with the immediate situation of the group. In addition to function and level and location in the organizational workflow, the nature of the organization itself has significant effects on activity patterns and efficacy (e.g., Meyer, 1978; McCall & Lombardo, Note 2). Managers facing volatile, unpredictable environments face vastly different leadership demands than those in relatively stable settings.

A second implication is that not all leaders are equally important to the effectiveness of the organization. Some, due to their level, function, or location in the system, are probably much more critical than others. These are, perhaps, the leaders we want to spend more time worrying about.

Participants-in-streams Perspective

A few writers have suggested that leader/follower is the wrong unit of analysis for studying leadership in organizations (Dubin, 1979; Lombardo & McCall, 1981). They suggest that problems flowing through organizations are the way to get at leadership. This view is entirely compatible with recent looks at power in organizations (see McCall, 1980, for a review) and at managerial decision making (McCall, Kaplan, & Gerlach, Note 3), which suggest that power and influence flow to people in a position to deal effectively with the problems that press. As problems change, or as they wend their way through various parts of the organization, both the

leadership skills required and the particular people located at critical nodes will change. The implication, of course, is that leadership changes as problems change and that any theory about leaders will have to have a dynamic element. Poignant examples can be found in police, fire, and military settings where leadership demands change dramatically from periods of inaction to crisis. One way to look at such shifts is to examine the changes in types of problems leaders face and the speed with which they must be resolved.

A further implication is that situational factors important to leadership will be different, depending on the nature of the problem faced rather than on static elements of the work group situation. A leader's style of dealing with subordinates may be entirely irrelevant for some problems; for others it may be determined by the problem regardless of any group contingencies. At still other times, style may be an all important choice for the leader. As long as we assume leader-group contingencies are critical and fixed, we'll never know for sure about the other facets.

Still another implication of problem focusing is that leadership may operate like a no-rules relay race. Problems may be handed off from one leader to another, perhaps cycling back to the original leader only to head off in still another direction. Ad hoc groups or committees may form and disband, subordinates or staff groups may be called upon at one time

or another. Just who crosses the finish line may be the least interesting leadership question.

The Trappings of Office

As the previous alternative views have suggested, leadership does not occur in a vacuum. The position one holds in the organizational hierarchy carries with it all manner of trappings: power, status, a budget, staff, authority. It also carries with it the expectations of others (Cohen and March, 1974). People (and the encumbents themselves) expect a president or C.E.O. to do certain things, and living up to the expectations of office are part of leadership. Various symbolic and figurehead roles come with the turf for some leaders, even though most leadership models don't make much of them. Further, people tend to read into the behavior of highly placed leaders messages that they otherwise wouldn't notice. George Patton (1947, p. 355) knew this when he said "Corps and Army Commanders must make it a point to be physically seen by as many individuals of their command as possible--certainly by all combat soldiers." While symbolic acts can be construed as transformational leadership (discussed by Burns, 1978) or charisma (discussed by House, 1974), a leader holding a significant office need not be inspirational to have pervasive effects. What the CEO says about a division or reorganization is likely to catch

the attention of relevant managers, even if the CEO is colorless.

The implication is that how one handles the trappings of office is a real part of leadership. Presumably the higher one goes up the hierarchy, the more significant these effects become. At the highest levels, only a few immediate subordinates may know what the leader is really like. For those further removed, images are the leader.

Toward a Consolidation of Alternative Views

The alternative views presented here (summarized in Figure 2) do not represent the domain of possibilities, nor should they be conceived of as "theories" of leadership. They simply represent a contrast to what more traditional models have suggested. If some or all of them seem plausible, however, the implications are staggering. They suggest that in applying traditional leadership models, we may be missing the boats that matter.

Insert Figure 2 About Here

For people in leadership positions where the job involves little more than dealing with direct reports (or in cases where the subordinate group is badly substandard), traditional leadership theories and the training suggested by them seems quite appropriate. But, as the figure indicates, alternative views raise a totally different series of questions.

Figure 2

Alternative Views

PERSPECTIVE	MAJOR FEATURES	IMPLICATIONS
Limited Impact	- Environmental & organizational forces severely constrain leader effects - Substitutes and neutralizers constrain leader impact even on group	- identify leaders who matter - look at leader efforts to get control - focus on choices, timing
Managerial Activities	- Fragmentation, brevity, interruptions, oral information, constant pace - Huge variety in contacts and topics	- subordinates only one of many critical contacts - time internal vs. external a critical issue - planning, organizing, etc. have different meaning
Leadership Location	- Importance of location of leader in work flow system	- many forces affect what leaders do - some leaders are at critical junctures, some are not
Participants in Streams	- Problems flow through, involving various leaders at various times	- leadership skills needed change as problems change - important situational factors also change with problems - more than one leader involved - timing a critical variable
Trappings of Office	- Ceremony, symbolism - Authority and expectations	- for some leaders handling trappings of office is critical factor - leadership is, in part, image

They emphasize the position of the leader in an organizational system, especially as that affects action on critical problems. They argue that understanding leadership requires knowledge of context, environmental forces, the roles of other leaders, timing, and so on. They suggest the importance of such unexplored (and subtle) phenomena as "triggers" that cause leaders to act, and deflections and other tactics leaders might use when they cannot exert full control.

This latter point, deflections and triggers, makes a lot of sense for viewing leadership in complex situations where individual leader action is constrained. A tantalizing example of the potential of this approach was provided by George Patton (1947). In reflecting on his career, he identified a number of incidents where he felt he had made an important difference. As he could hardly be considered a humble man, his view of his contribution to six of these events is intriguing:

- it needed just that sort of kick to get it started (p. 382).
- a little extra push at a critical moment is sometimes useful (p. 383).
- it is the duty of the Army Commander to supply the necessary punch when fatigue starts sapping the energy of the other officers (p. 386).
- the only claim I have is my insistence that [a decision to cross the river] be made at the time it was made (p. 388).
- I'm not sure I deserve much credit for the decision except that it was a decision (p. 389).

- my sole virtue was having the idea (p. 389).

Traditional views of leadership leave little room for this kind of subtlety.

An Approach to Leadership Development based on Alternative Views

Now, all of these alternative nctions might be "just interesting," except that they can be consolidated in ways that have significant implications for leadership development and the human resources programs that support it. Just as traditional theories of leadership focus on individual leaders and their interactions with a follower group, so do traditional leadership development programs. Alternative views suggest a much broader, organization-focused approach that might be described, for the sake of argument, as four phases in the design of a leadership development program: strategic, tactical, operational, and application.

The Strategic Phase

Consider the view that leadership may not always matter and that environmental forces can overwhelm individual efforts. At the most strategic level, then, planning for leadership development begins with a close look at the nature of the environment(s) affecting the organization and at the organization's plans for future directions or changes. As nearly as possible, leadership development would concentrate

on those areas where leadership is likely to make some difference (now or in the future) vis-a-vis the organization's goals. It is rarely the case that an organization has the resources to emphasize all leadership situations or to train (more than superficially) all potential leaders.

This examination of the organization and its environment would include a hard look at the kinds of problems and opportunities that are coming up. Understanding these should help identify those parts of the organization most likely to need effective leadership.

The purpose of the strategic phase, then, is to identify the "problems that press" the organization as a result of the environment it faces and its strategic direction. This should result in a general strategic direction for leadership development, focusing activities on the toughest issues the organization is facing (or is about to face).

The Tactical Phase

The second step, once a general strategic direction for development is set, is to diagnose how the organization operates on pressing problems. Three basic questions must be answered:

- given the kinds of problems (opportunities) facing the organization, how are they likely to flow through the system? Which positions will be in-

volved, in what ways? Will new kinds of problems flow through certain positions?

- given that certain positions in the organization have more clout than others, what roles will those leaders have to play? If power is likely to shift (as it may if the critical problems change), what transitions must be made and by whom?
- where are the breakpoints? What positions at what interfaces will be the most crucial in handling the problems coming up?

Notice that these three questions all focus on leadership positions as they relate to problem flows--they do not yet look at individual leaders, nor do they classify all managerial jobs by function or task (as a job analysis would). This is a tactical phase of designing leadership development, aimed entirely at identifying specific junctures at which leadership will likely make a difference on key problems. By virtue of the organization's key issues, certain leadership positions will have to connect; certain encumbents will have to do different things, cooperate at different levels, use resources in different ways.

Tactical design is essentially diagnostic--it identifies those leadership positions likely to have significant impact (for good or ill) on the critical organizational problems. It is tactical because the leadership roles of interest are likely to change as problems emerge and evolve. This

suggests that leadership development has to keep moving, keeping certain central targets in sight.

The Operational Phase

Our hypothetical design effort is now ready for the third phase. Key leadership positions have been identified, as have the key problems facing the organization. It is now possible to look at the skills that will be required of the leaders facing these problems. Each of the alternative views discussed earlier suggests certain skills that may be necessary, depending on the nature of the problems faced and how problems flow through the organization. Some likely possibilities include:

- how to develop and maintain a network of contacts that can provide information and assistance
- how to work effectively with staff specialists
- how to design and redesign organization structure and systems to fit with leadership demands
- how to compensate for the weaknesses of other managers who are involved in the same problems (including the boss)
- how to use the power vested by one's position (e.g., symbolic functions) or to compensate for a lack of formal power

- how to use substitutes for leadership to free up more time for lateral relationships and activities other than supervision.
- how to act as a shepherd for convoluted, sticky problem-solving sequences.

Notice that these examples do not assume that the world is a bunch of university dpeartments. They do not separate content (finance, marketing, technology) from process (group dynamics, motivation). Both the "managerial activities" and "participants-in-streams" perspectives suggest that the functions, content, and process intermix for leaders and should not be treated separately. For example, an investment decision is likely to require financial savvy, but also skills in organization design (how do we structure the new operation?), group dynamics (how do all the managers involved work together on this?), and so on. Thus leadership development is a systematic effort to help leaders who must make important decisions to acquire the skills they need--not necessarily as individuals (there aren't too many water-walkers) but as clusters of individuals who collectively provide leadership for the organization.

There is still another element in the operational phase: The issue of managerial activity patterns. Whatever leaders will have to do to solve major problems, they will have to do it in a managerial world of fragmentation, interruptions, juggling of demands, multiple contacts, fast pace, etc. The

design of leadership development must take these realities into account. It serves no purpose to teach managers eight logical steps of problem solving if they cannot be applied in the swirl of daily managerial life.

Including these issues will require creativity on the part of leadership development people because the meaning of traditional activities like planning, organizing, and coordinating is not clear when fifty percent of a manager's activities last 9 minutes or less (Mintzberg, 1973).

The Application Phase

At this point, then, the skills required have been identified, a blend of content, process, and context. Now comes the decision on how to develop these leadership skills, if in fact they need to or can be developed. It is here that all the available human resource systems need to be considered. There are no magic answers in classroom training or in turning loose OD specialists. Not all of the leadership skills needed are easily trained (or even trainable), nor are well-oiled management teams always the answer. The options to consider in getting leadership talent to the right places include:

- selecting or assessing for specific skills and abilities
- transferring people with the right skills to the critical positions

- classroom training/skills development
- team development based on targeted clusters of jobs
- structured change or job redesign to manipulate skill mixes
- alterations in reward and control systems to make explicit links to desired behavior
- career pathing to expose leaders to various challenges over the course of their careers
- on the job coaching

Notice that the goal of development is to assist the organization in solving its pressing problems by finding or developing the leadership talent required and by getting that talent to the right places at the right times. No single technique can accomplish this, and that's why the application phase requires an integrated approach to human resource systems. Tackling leadership development only in training, for example, is like playing eighteen holes with only one club.

Unfortunately, most organizations have separate programs, often loosely coordinated at best, for leadership selection, placement, assessment, training, development, human resource planning, and control (compensation, appraisal). The alternative views taken as a whole strongly suggest that 1) various of the approaches will be more appropriate in different leadership situations and 2) a lot

of energy will be required to coordinate among these alternatives.

The Overall Sequence

The sequence described above is presented in Figure 3. It looks logical and orderly, like most theoretical planning models. In fact, it might be argued that this process, from strategy to application, is what most human resource functions are doing or trying to do. Perhaps, but there are some crucial differences between what the alternative views suggest and contemporary practice.

Insert Figure 3 About Here

First, leadership development under alternative assumptions is proactive rather than reactive. It attempts to anticipate problems and changes and help the organization prepare for them. In that sense, human resource professionals must find ways to scan the organizational environment, work with the planners, and forecast leadership needs. Above all, they need to know the "business" the organization is in and be able to talk with leaders on the line.

Second, this approach is focused on problems rather than on individuals, fixed curricula, or packages of generic leadership skills. This means that the development process has

Figure 3

An Alternative Approach to Leadership Development

Strategic Phase	- Examine organizational environments
	- Anticipate problems and opportunities
	- Link to organizational planning
Tactical Phase	- Identify the critical leadership positions for key problems
	- Identify changes expected/needed
Operational Phase	- Analyze content and process skills needed in various positions for various problems
	- Incorporate activity context
Application Phase	- Choose appropriate human resource programs to meet objectives
	- Integrate programs

to be at least as dynamic and as diverse as the problems are. This is not to say that there won't be core elements of the leadership development process, but rather that the guiding force is response to and anticipation of organizational problems. Whatever is needed to handle those problems is part of leadership development. Moreover, development sequences must stay in synch with the problems, changing as they change.

Third, this approach requires a level of integration among human resource functions unheard of in most organizations. Achieving this may require project or matrix organization for human resources, where the various functions can make their contributions to common problems.

Some of the key differences in leadership development for traditional and alternative assuptions are summarized in Figure 4.

Insert Figure 4 About Here

Problems Created by an Alternative Approach to Leadership Development

The approach to leadership development outlined here is pragmatic, elitist, threatening, mystical, alien, and political. Each of these characteristics creates problems, many of which cannot be surmounted in an organizational setting.

Figure 4

Key Differences in Leadership Development Approaches

ISSUE	TRADITIONAL	ALTERNATIVE
Strategy/ goals	based on philosophy or models of management	based on pragmatic concern concern for organizational effectiveness
	or reactive to organization dictates	proactive
	or independent of organization plans	keyed to organizational problems, plans
Tactics/ diagnosis	focuses on using job and needs analysis techniques	focuses on diagnosis of problem flows, identification of key jobs
	aims for fixed curriculum	
Operations/ content	individuals, small groups	dynamic
		strategic clusters
	content, process separated	integrate content, process
	traditional models, skills	different kinds of skills
		geared to management problems
	geared to management level	
Application	different Human Resource functions have different turf	Human Resource functions matches to needs and integrated

The approach is pragmatic because its foundations rest on organizational or business plans and key organizational problems. These foundations make leadership development much more relevant than it often is (that is, it can be directly linked to organizational performance), but they also make the human resources effort subject to the same problems found in operational and strategic planning. If an organization focuses on short term objectives, leadership will be developed with short-term horizons. If the organization can't anticipate or denies its critical problems, there won't be leaders when and where they are needed. If development strategies are keyed to using existing skills (for instance, by continually moving the proven leaders to the current hot spots), no reservoir of new talent can develop.

The alternative is elitist in the sense that it concentrates on carefully selected leadership positions. Instead of providing training for all managers or making developmental experiences equally accessible, development is clearly intended to affect those leaders who are involved in critical problems and who have the best chance to make a difference. This opens up possible accusations of discrimination, accumulation of large numbers of managers lacking basic skills, closing out career progress for managers not exposed to developmental opportunities, and the loss of talent that might have been available had developmental effort been applied.

Some organizations may be able to do both -- provide basic development for all managers and focused development for a few. For those that can't, it's a tough choice.

The alternative is threatening, not just to the managers it excludes, but also to the human resource people involved. It's threatening because no human resource function is necessarily assured continued existence and because the turf of each is subject to encroachment by the others. Under some conditions, selection and assessment strategies may outshine training and OD.

It is also threatening because the approach makes promises about solving organizational problems and fulfilling organizational objectives. The link between leadership development and organizational outcomes will be more obvious, and human resources groups risk becoming the scapegoat for leadership failure.

The approach is mystical because each of the four design phases requires astute guesswork. The translation of organizational strategy into human resource programs is an act of creativity. Anticipating future problems is often like reading tea leaves. Predicting how problems will flow through an organizational system requires unusual prescience. Perhaps the most mystical process of all is coming up with specific content/process/context blends that can be articulated, much less trained or identified. Even if they can be

articulated, more guesses must be made on how to most effectively address them.

The approach is alien, partly because of the above qualities, but also because it questions many well-accepted principles of human resource planning. Traditional job analysis, for example, is relegated minor status relative to diagnosing problem flows. Institutional training, based on a fixed curriculum, becomes dynamic, changing as problems change. Groups or clusters of people to be developed no longer form necessarily by level or function or formal reporting relationships. Curriculum design (if there is any) no longer flows from disciplines or traditional topics and models.

And, obviously, the approach is highly political. Human resource people have to be involved at all stages of organizational planning--a process from which they are usually excluded. Human resource people must have clout--they have to be able to say that Division X will not receive attention this year because Division Y has more critical needs. In addition, integration of the diverse human resource functions into a coordinated development thrust will itself require highly skilled leadership. Whereas many key officials in organizations have not been willing to be trained (or even evaluated), the new approach will in many cases require them to participate extensively.

Finally, it is political because human resource programs serve many functions other than leadership development: they can become rewards for service, a laying on of swords for the annointed, a symbol of concern for people, and so on. These are not trivial roles.

Overcoming these obstacles is no small leadership act. The forces keeping leadership development traditional are prodigious indeed, and we may be better off keeping our heads down. On the other hand, we can again turn to George Patton (1947, p. 354) for advice:

> War is a very simple thing, and the determining characteristics are self-confidence, speed, and audacity. None of these things can ever be perfect, but they can be good.

Is There a Middle Ground?

For all the reasons listed above, changing the approach to leadership development all at once may not be feasible. Is there a middle ground? The answer I think is yes. I don't know exactly where it lies, but the major advantage of considering alternative views of leadership lies in the prods they provide for thinking about alternative applications. There do seem to be some core elements that shift direction slightly without creating insurmountable hurdles. If I had to pick a few, they would be:

1) Link [illegible] human resource programming directly to organizational plans and problems. Too often H.R. is seen as

low status, tangential, or irrelevant to the organization. Sometimes human resource professionals cannot talk intelligently to line managers about organizational problems and concerns, leading to serious credibility loss. The linkage might be accomplished directly by including human resource people with strategic planners when strategies are formulated. It can be done indirectly through relationships developed by human resource professionals with key line managers.

2) Melding content and process, particularly in training and development settings, but also in appraisal criteria, selection procedures, and so on. Virtually all aspects of managerial work require some interpersonal skills. When content is taught, the relevant process skills should also be taught. I believe managers will learn more if, for example, a course in financial planning also covers the group dynamics, bargaining, motivation, and other aspects involved in implementing the content. Managers may actually use process skills if they can see how they help them solve their ongoing problems.

3) Integrating human resources programs. Too often each function exists in its own world, acting as if the others do not exist and united only by a manager somewhere up the line. The result is often dismal: appraisal forms that evaluate managers on dimensions contrary to the training they have received, selection procedures that use as criteria

characteristics that the organizational development people spend their time trying to change.

Integration can be achieved by strong leadership that unites the various functions around a finite set of objectives. It can also be improved if one function, say human resource planning, has enough power and centrality to lead the way for the others (e.g., because we anticipate a shortage of junior executives in division A, training will offer the necessary courses to prepare people for such jobs).

4) Targeting human resource efforts. Even if many of the human resource programs remain somewhat traditional, at least some group can target specific problem areas for special attention. Many organizations now do this, usually through organizational development specialists. Such targeted activities, if they really help line managers solve problems, can create a foothold for human resource influence on a larger scale.

A Final Note on Leadership

This paper began by looking at some characteristics of traditional views of leadership and contrasting them with some alternative approaches. The remainder of the paper has tried to show how different assumptions can lead to quite different views of leadership development in organizations. There are, of course, implications for leadership research as well.

Of Circles and Geocentrism

Sometimes analogies, however loose, provide useful insights. If we consider the history of astronomy (Kuhn, 1957), some interesting parallels to leadership research emerge. For example, early astronomers faced dramatic disparities between the observations of planetary motion and the theories available to explain it. Given the assumptions of the time (the earth is the center of the universe and the celestial bodies travel in circles), it became difficult to explain the observed retrograde motion of the planets.

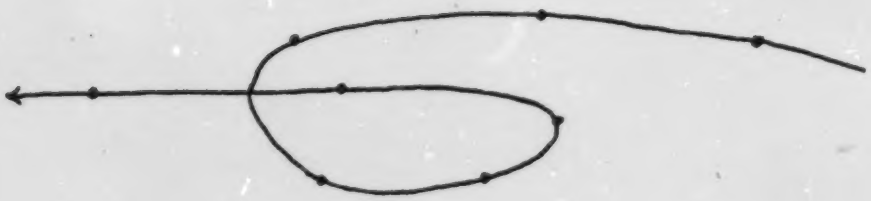
Apollonius and Hipparchus, buying the assumptions, attempted to explain the data by postulating deferents and epicycles. Later astronomers, still attempting to explain inconsistent data, added more epicycles. Over time, a reasonably powerful and elegant model took shape which could, with a surprising degree of accuracy, explain the observations. This explanation, represented in Figure 5, was extremely potent.

Insert Figure 5 About Here

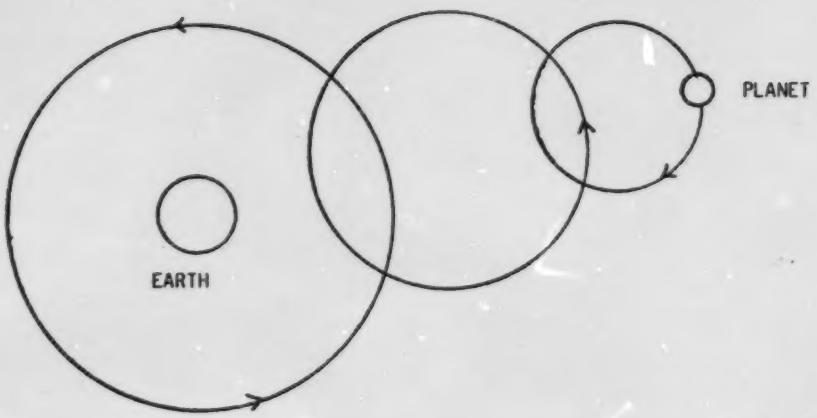
Of course future efforts to completely reconcile data and theory showed that the model, as incredible as it was, did not work. "After thirteen centuries of fruitless research a perceptive astronomer might well wonder . . .

Figure 5

Planetary Motion and Theory Based on Traditional Assumptions



Observed planetary motion against the stars



Theory using deferent, major epicycle,
and minor epicycle to explain observations

whether further attempts within the same tradition could conceivably be successful" (Kuhn, 1957, p. 140).

Then along came Copernicus, who developed an explanation based on a heliocentric universe, and Kepler, who postulated elliptical orbits. Using new assumptions, it was possible to explain the data with greater simplicity and accuracy (see Figure 6).

Insert Figure 6 About Here

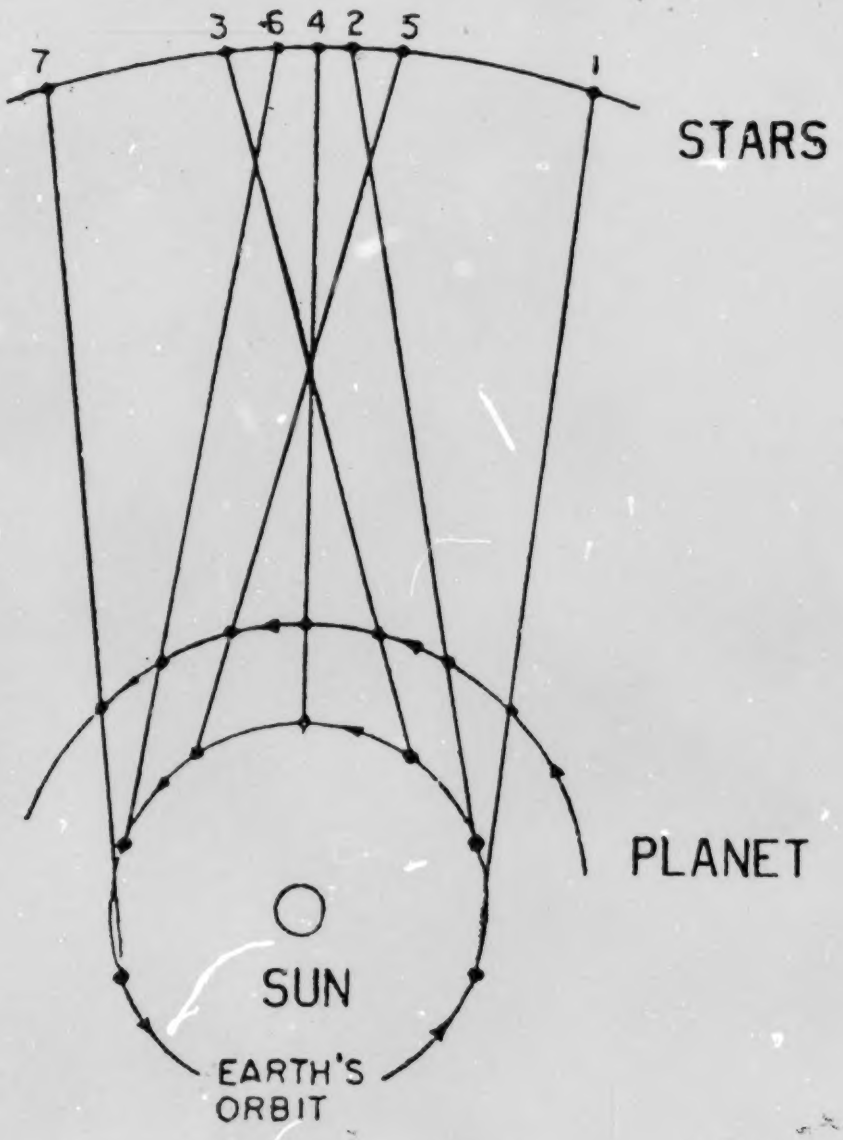
Epicycle Leadership Research

It may be that our current work in leadership is quite similar to the astronomers' early attempts to make the model fit the data by adding more circles. Instead of deferents and epicycles, we see a proliferation of variables. The exponential growth of "moderator" and leader behavior variables within the traditional assumptions has led to increasingly elegant and complex models (Yukl, 1981; Stogdill, 1974) that still fail to explain the data. It may be worth the effort to at least try out some different assumptions.

The first question the astronomy analogy raises is, "have we got reliable observational data against which to 'fit' our leadership models?" People observed the heavens for centuries, and, even before the telescope, significant

Figure 6

Using Different Assumptions to
Explain Observed Planetary Motion



data on planetary motion were available. Observations were what the model builders were trying to explain.

It would seem that 50 years would be ample time to develop a catalog of observations of leadership. Yet where is it? With a few notable exceptions (see McCall, Morrison, & Hannan, Note 4, for a review of diary and observational studies), little research is available to tell us how leaders actually behave. What little does exist appears to have little, if any, impact on the models being developed.

The Heliocentric Inversion

One fundamental assumption we might question is that the leader-subordinate relationship is the center of the universe. While this assumption flows logically from the small group research that formed the foundations for current work in leadership, it does not fit observations (particularly for mid- and upper-level managers).

The "heliocentric" approach suggests that leadership (not the situation) is the moderator. Whereas many current models attempt to adapt environmental and situational variables to a mediating position between leader behavior and group outcomes (Figure 7), a more realistic approach might view leaders as mediating between environmental characteristics and system outcomes (Figure 8). This one change, it seems to me, is entirely consistent with the

alternative views discussed in this paper and opens up a whole new set of possibilities for research on leadership.

Insert Figures 7 and 8 About Here

I'm not sure it matters whether or not managers and leaders are the same thing. In most organizations, people who are designated as managers are expected to lead; those who lead without the title often get promoted to manager status. What I think we are trying to understand is what it means to perform effectively in a position of leadership. To do this will require a bit less saber rattling and considerably more cooperation among those researchers claiming a piece of the leadership turf.

We need to know, from the organizational researchers, when leadership matters and when it doesn't. We need their help in understanding which leadership positions do make a difference and why. From the researchers looking at managerial behavior, we need their knowledge of what managers actually do, the variations in activity patterns, demands, and choices in managerial jobs, and the kinds of problems faced on a daily basis. And, from the leadership researchers, we need knowledge of how and when individual leader behavior affects the actions of followers.

Figure 7

The Traditional Model

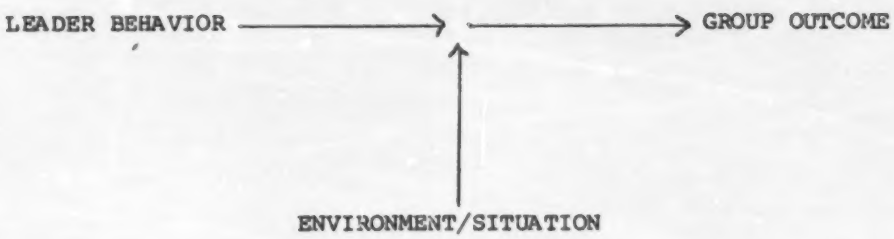
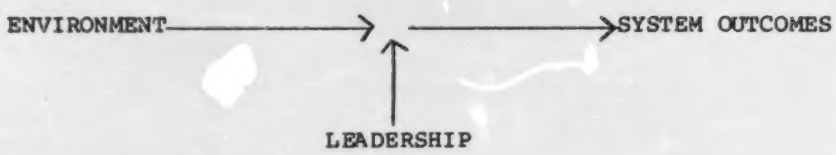


Figure 8

Leadership as Moderator



Progress is being made on all these fronts, and that is grounds for optimism.

> It is not so bad being ignorant; the hard thing is knowing in some detail the reality of ignorance, the worst spots and here and there the not-so-bad spots, but no true light at the end of any tunnel nor even any tunnels that can yet be trusted. . . .
>
> But we are making a beginning, and there ought to be some satisfaction, even exhiliration, in that . . . . Within our limits, we should be able to work our way through to all our answers, if we keep at it long enough, and pay attention. (Thomas, 1979, p. 74)

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